



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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BAUCUS CALLS PORTMAN “STRONG CHOICE” FOR OMB DIRECTOR, EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT TIMING OF CHANGE FOR TRADE POLICY

*Senator lauds Ambassador’s ‘bridge-building’ at USTR;
shift comes at critical moment in international trade*

Washington, DC - U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, today called U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman a “strong choice” as the new Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Baucus described Portman as a pragmatic bridge-builder during his time as U.S. Trade Representative (USTR). He expressed concern that a major change at USTR is happening at a “critical moment” for international trade.

“In his brief tenure as USTR, Ambassador Portman has worked tirelessly to rebuild a bipartisan trade consensus and restore confidence in Congress about the direction of U.S. trade policy. I’m sure his pragmatism and bridge-building skills will serve the nation well at OMB,” said Baucus. **“I am concerned that this major shift at USTR will create uncertainty on U.S. trade policy for American exporters, for our trading partners, and for Congress. It’s a critical moment in international trade, and the world needs to see a strong, consistent commitment to U.S. leadership.”**

Today’s announcement comes 12 days before a critical deadline in the Doha Round of World Trade Organization negotiations. It also comes shortly after the United States launched free trade agreement negotiations with two of our most important trading partners -- Korea and Malaysia. President Bush has expressed his intention to nominate Susan Schwab, currently the Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, to replace Ambassador Portman.

“Ambassador Schwab will make a good U.S. Trade Representative,” noted Baucus. **“She has vast experience in international trade policy. She has oversized shoes to fill and a full plate to tackle. I look forward to working closely with her during this critical period.”**

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